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# PLAN FOR CHESTER

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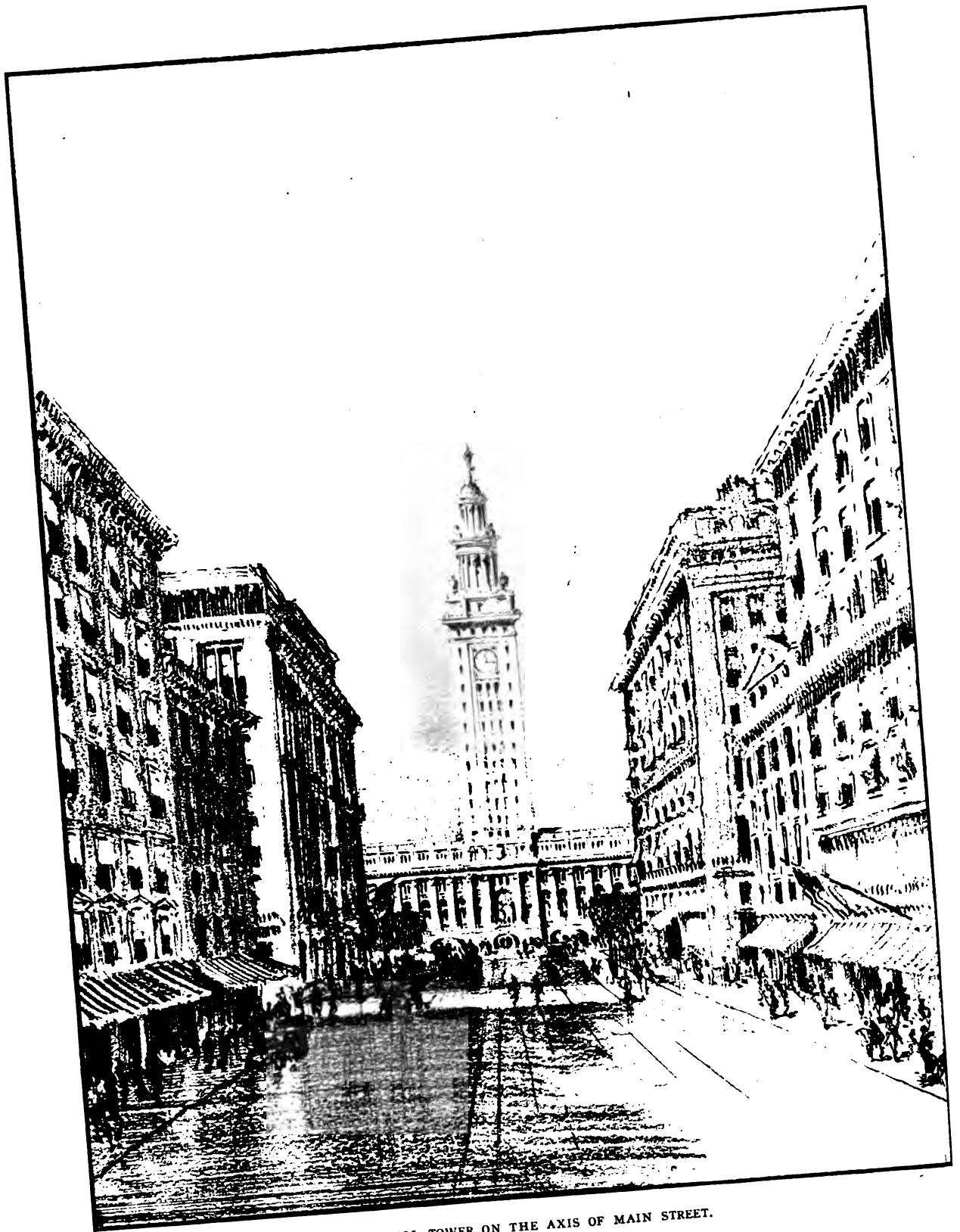
OF

The School of  
Landscape Architecture





A City Plan for Rochester



CITY HALL TOWER ON THE AXIS OF MAIN STREET.

o

# A CITY PLAN FOR ROCHESTER

A Report Prepared for the  
Rochester Civic Improvement Committee  
Rochester, N. Y.

By  
Arnold W. Brunner  
Architect  
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M C M X I

DEPARTMENT OF  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

112

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# Introductory

**R**OCHESTER is exceptionally agreeable among American cities of its size; it is prosperous; it is growing. What occasion is there for improvement? Just because it is prosperous and growing Rochester must take steps to meet the changing conditions forced upon it by that growth, or in the absence of improvement will come deterioration; for a living city cannot stand still.

The main physical features of the city, over which the municipality alone has responsible comprehensive control, are (1) the means of local transportation, consisting of streets and the street railways and other public services that use them and thereby multiply their usefulness; and (2) the public buildings and public open spaces for every kind of use. All of these must be considered with regard to their net value to the community from the point of view of their practical efficiency and from that of their contribution to the agreeableness of the city as a place of residence and of industry.

The long distance transportation facilities can be controlled to a certain extent by the City, but this report accepts the new Union Station and the new Barge Canal Harbor as fixtures and does not enter into a general discussion of the Railroad or Harbor problems.

The City also can and does exercise a very important control over developments on private property, especially through the exercise of the police power, with a view to maintaining a certain standard of healthfulness and safety in the living conditions of the people. The high standard of living, together with the correspondingly high standard of efficiency in work, on which Americans in general congratulate themselves, are certainly illustrated in the industrial history of Rochester. A variety of causes has tended to keep the standards very high in Rochester, and the advantages in the long run are apparent; but with the growth of the city the pressure of opportunity for immediate cash savings and immediate cash profits, with the pressure of rising land values, will tend more and more to depress the standards of healthful and

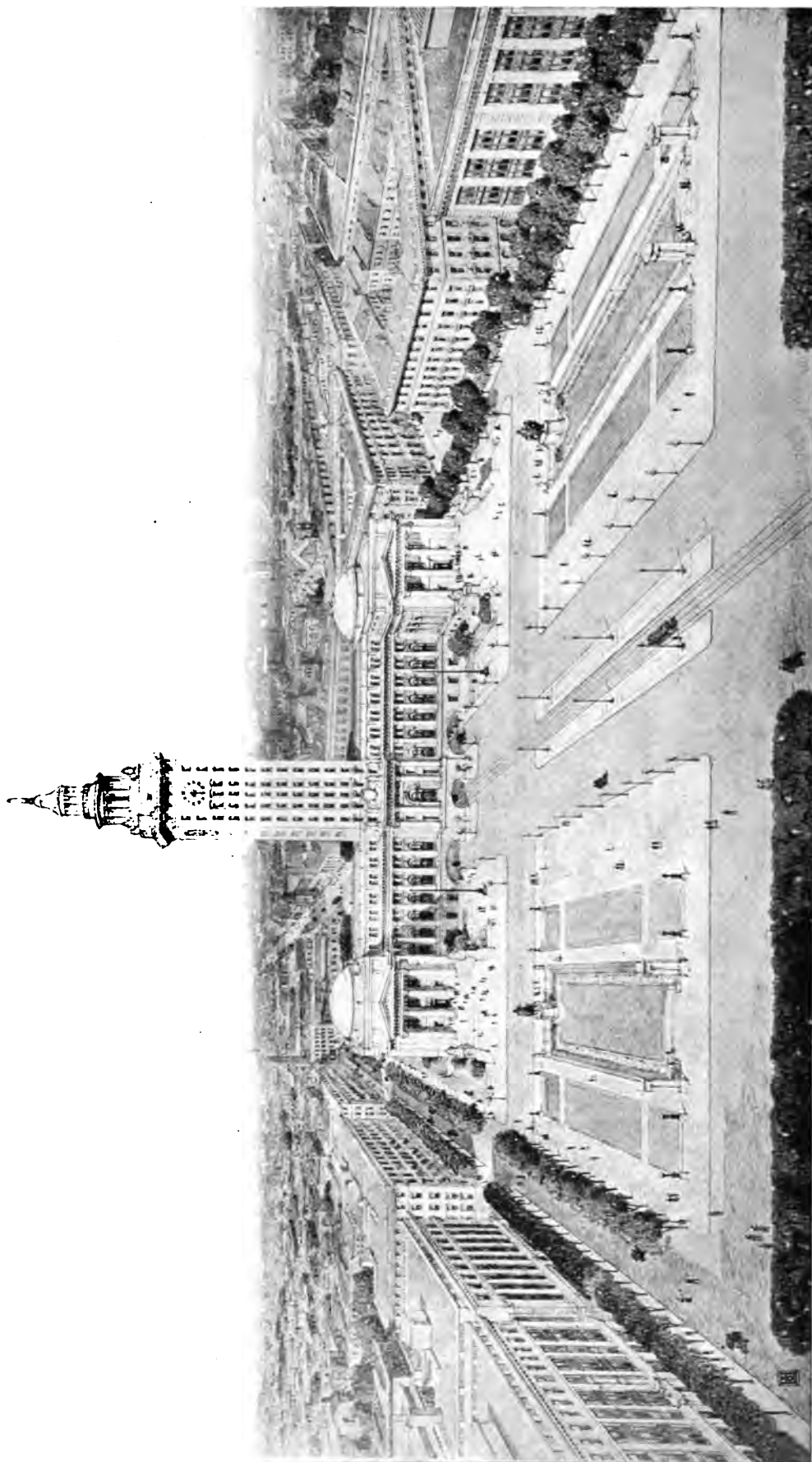
comfortable housing and living. It lies in the City's own hands to fix an arbitrary minimum in regard to many of the conditions controlling the healthfulness and agreeableness of the people's habitations and places of work, and thus to prevent those who cannot, or who foolishly will not, rise to that minimum standard from competing directly with those who do.

We have said thus much to indicate the enormous importance of public regulation of "improvements" on private property in connection with the improvement of properties directly under public control, such regulation as can be successfully exercised only through the ceaseless activity of the appropriate public officials working under the stimulus of an adequate public opinion. But it is no part of the present report to enter into the complex details of housing ordinances or district building regulations adapted to the conditions of Rochester. We can only point out that in every city the freedom of the individual must often be sacrificed for the good of the community; that, as a city grows, municipal control or regulation of private activities is more and more needed to safeguard the public welfare.

In making the recommendations and suggestions embodied in this report it has been our aim to bear in mind the present characteristics of Rochester and the natural lines of its growth—to preserve the one and stimulate the other; and not to force improvements alien to the city. Rochester has a strong individuality among American cities—an individuality to be guarded and encouraged. Rochester at its best—improved and enlarged—must still be Rochester. And its well known enterprise and highly developed civic pride justify high hopes for the future city.

As outlined in the Table of Contents above, this report deals, first, with certain specific improvements, more or less imminent, in the central part of the city; second, with the general question of improving the street system of the city, illustrated by a number of specific suggestions; and third, with the general question of public lands, other than highways, especially those to be used for park purposes, also illustrated by a number of specific suggestions.

**Part I—The Centre of the City**



CIVIC CENTER FOR ROCHESTER.

# PART I

## THE CENTER OF THE CITY

### City Hall and Civic Center

ONE of the most important and at the same time most perplexing problems brought to our consideration was to suggest a suitable City Hall in a suitable setting. The present building is not only outgrown in size and unworthy in architectural character, but is situated in a most undignified manner in the backyard, as it were, of the Court House.

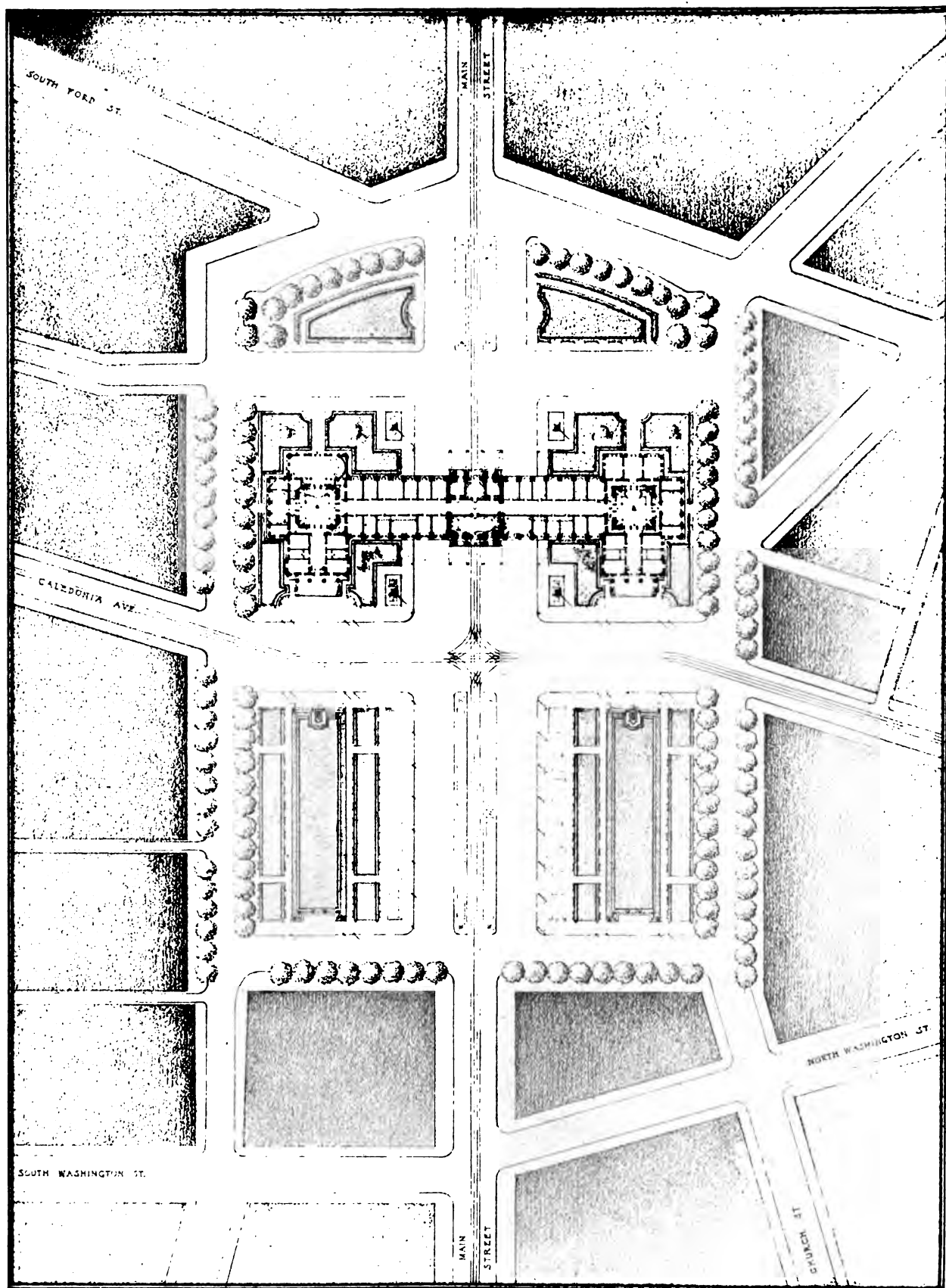
The problem is to find, at a reasonable cost, a conveniently accessible site where a City Hall of adequate dimensions may be erected, with room for expansion, with opportunity for the grouping of other important buildings near it, and with enough open space to give it a worthy setting. For many reasons it appears clearly inadvisable to remove the City Hall to a wholly different part of the city. The present location is central, and to make a radical change would require much inconvenient readjustment among those having business to do with the City Hall. Largely for this reason, after careful individual consideration, every one of a number of possible sites on the easterly side of the river was discarded. The land near the Court House, both on Main Street and to the north of Main Street, is so occupied and of such value that it offers no opportunity for securing an ample site at a possible price. This practically narrows the problem down either to the formation of a new site on back land somewhere in a southerly direction from the Court House with an adequate and dignified approach and vista from Main Street, or to the selection of a site further west on Main Street itself.

Much study failed to develop any satisfactory design for a Civic Center southward from the Court House without making such an opening in the very costly Main Street frontage as to be almost prohibitive. Without such a broad opening from Main Street this project would resolve itself into a mere modification of the present situation—would amount to the placing of the City Hall in a larger and more ornamental backyard, but still in a backyard.

However much the growing and expanding business and traffic of Rochester may increase the importance of other streets, it cannot be doubted that Main Street will always have a marked predominance. In the last analysis nothing but lack of funds would excuse the location of the one building which ought to represent the united power and wealth and public spirit of all the citizens elsewhere than upon Main Street, and in the most commanding and dignified position.

Now it so happens that up to the present time the erection of costly commercial structures and the accompanying rise in land values on Main Street has pushed scarcely more than two blocks west of the Court House, and just beyond the region of high values is a location of peculiar topographical advantages for a great public building. It is the crest of the gentle rising grade, where the long vista of Main Street culminates on the west near its junction with Caledonia Avenue and the old canal bed.

The conversion of the old canal into a street and the opening through of Church Street as a relief line for Main Street (as elsewhere dis-



PLAN FOR THE CIVIC CENTER.

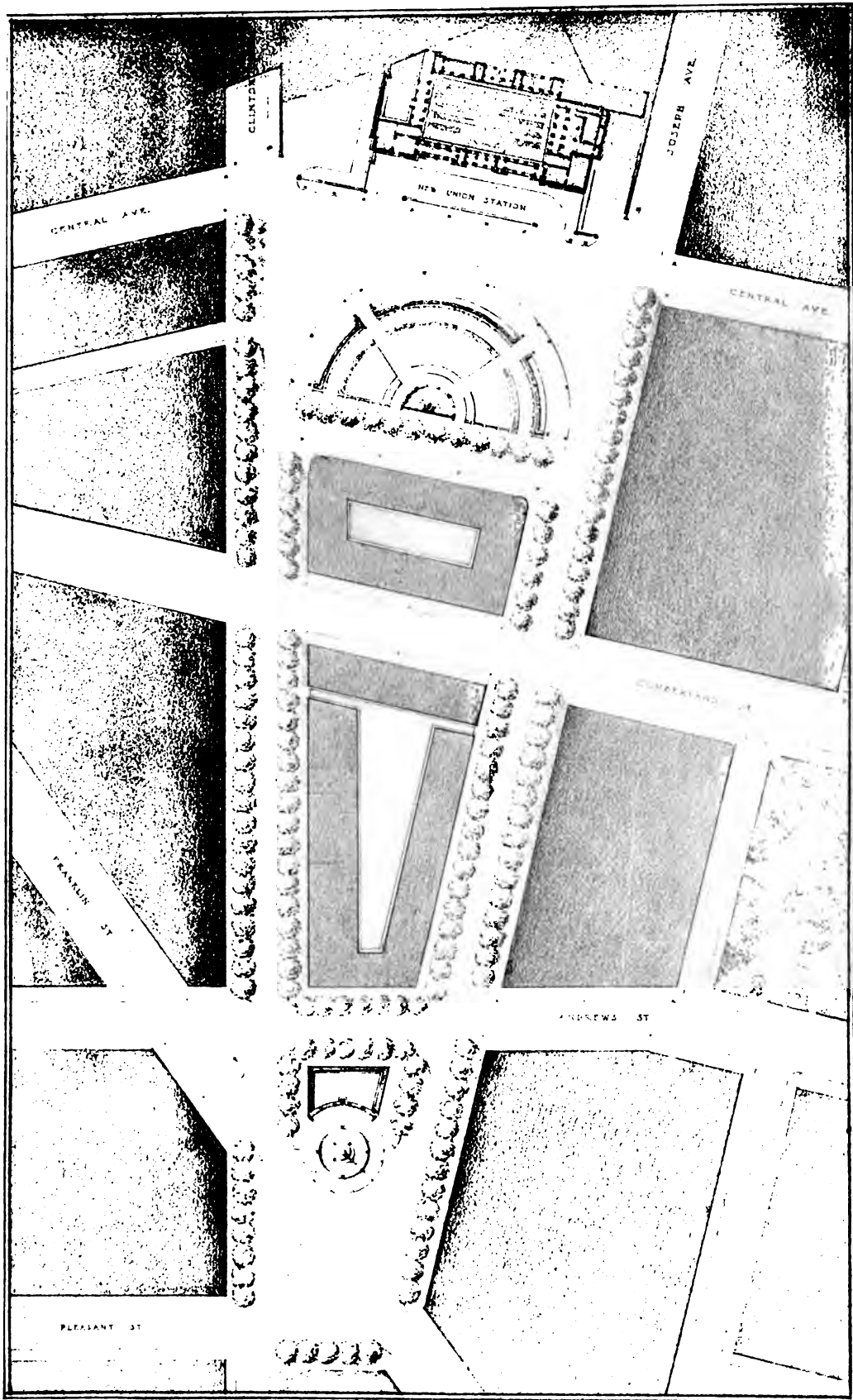
cussed) will add much to the importance of this point as a traffic center, but nothing can add to or diminish its architectural importance as the culminating point of the broad central vista of the city.

The design for the treatment of this location, submitted herewith, really explains itself. The essential features are an open public square, into which Main Street expands; a City Hall rising into a commanding central tower proportionate to the length and importance of the vista which it terminates; the unobstructed passage of the Main Street traffic through ample archways in the building; and such control over the frontage upon the square thus formed that, whether it be occupied by public or by commercial buildings,

the property shall not be so used as to nullify the public expenditure in forming the square.

The building shown in the drawings, consisting of a main central mass, an office-building tower and two wings, would provide considerably more than enough space to meet the immediate requirements of the city; but the design is adaptable to construction by successive stages. No one, who has considered the procedure of American cities in respect to public buildings, can have failed to be impressed by the waste of money and the serious inconvenience that result from the plan of erecting complete buildings which contain only sufficient accommodation to allow for the growth of a few years, and which cannot be enlarged.





PLAN FOR APPROACHES AND PLAZA FOR THE NEW UNION STATION.

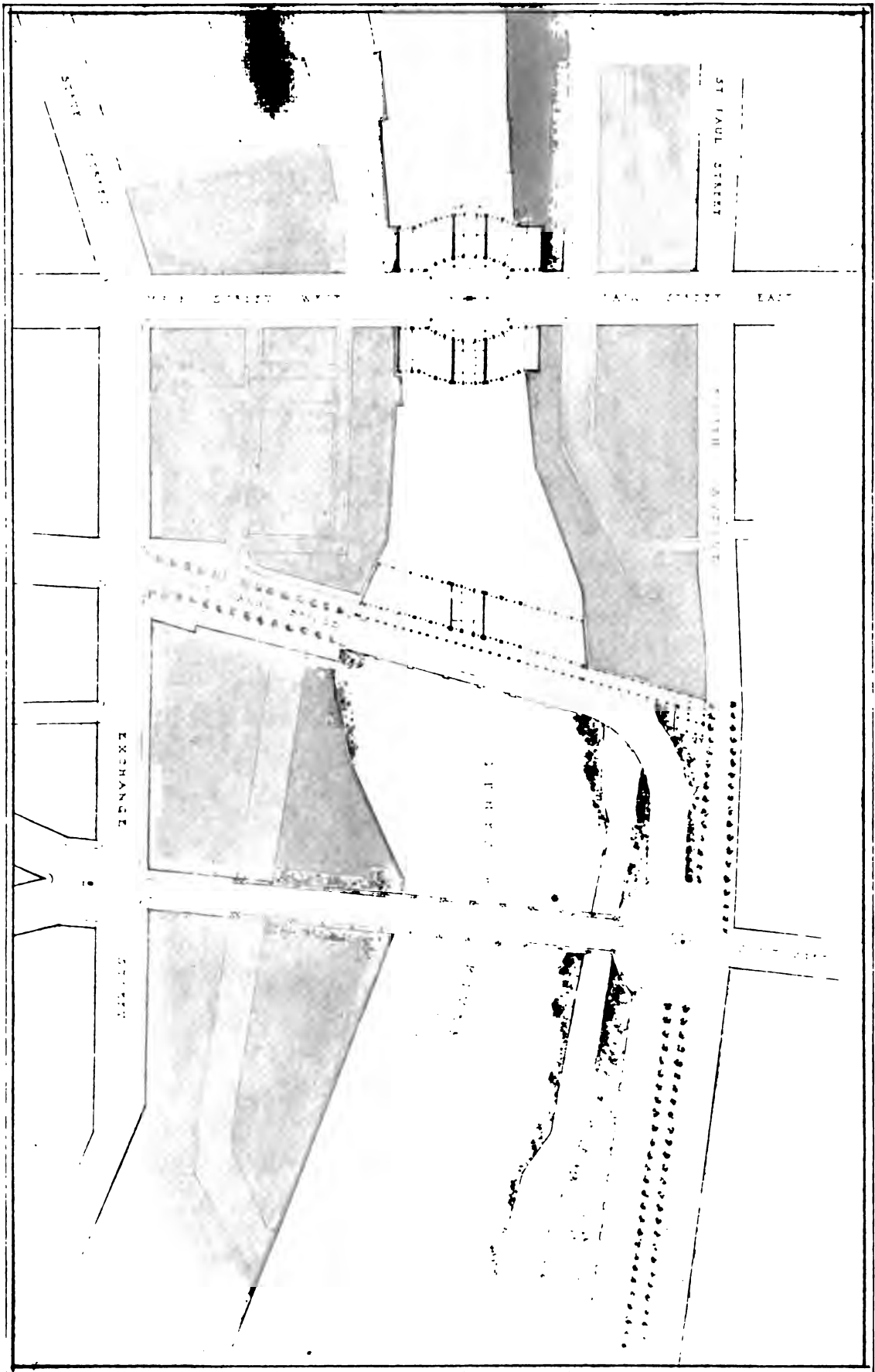
## Railroad Station Plaza and Approach

**O**F civic importance comparable with that of the City Hall, is the new station of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, and its setting and approaches. It is an interesting fact that it occupies a position north of Main Street almost symmetrical with that of the Convention Hall and Washington Square south thereof.

The principal streets leading toward the new station from Main Street are Clinton Avenue and Franklin Street as far as their junction, and beyond that point Clinton Avenue only. Both are very important thoroughfares apart from their function as approaches to the station, and neither is as wide as a main thoroughfare should be. Franklin Street can be widened without destroying many valuable buildings or interfering with the present arrangement of lots. But from the corner of Franklin Street and Clinton Avenue to the station any material improvement must involve radical changes. The plan here-

with submitted, as offering the best practicable solution of the problem, is to extend Joseph Avenue, which flanks the east side of the station, straight through to Franklin Street; to acquire the whole triangle between this line and Clinton Avenue; to take enough land from the sides of the triangle to convert both the flanking streets into handsome tree-lined boulevards; to provide an ornamental square at the south end of the triangle and an ornamental station plaza at the north end; and to re-lot the remaining land for the erection of stores and apartments or other commercial buildings, the appearance of which should be controlled to a reasonable extent by the City.

The location and design of this whole station setting and approach is such as to facilitate the movement and dispersal of passengers, and to provide that dignified attractiveness which is so much to be desired at the entrance to the city.



PLAN SUGGESTING TREATMENT FOR MAIN STREET OVER RIVER, THE OLD CANAL AQUEDUCT, COURT STREET BRIDGE AND SOUTH AVENUE.



ARCHED OPENINGS ON THE PONTE VECCHIO, FLORENCE.  
A SUGGESTION FOR MAIN STREET.



UNSIGHTLY STRUCTURES ON THE RIVER SOUTH OF MAIN STREET;  
HIDDEN BY PROPOSED BUILDING ON THE AQUEDUCT.

## The River in the Heart of the City

**T**HOUSANDS of visitors come to Rochester and do business there, crossing and recrossing over the Genesee River on Main Street, and never know that there is a river near them, so completely is it blanketed by the buildings which have been built over it along the Main Street frontage.

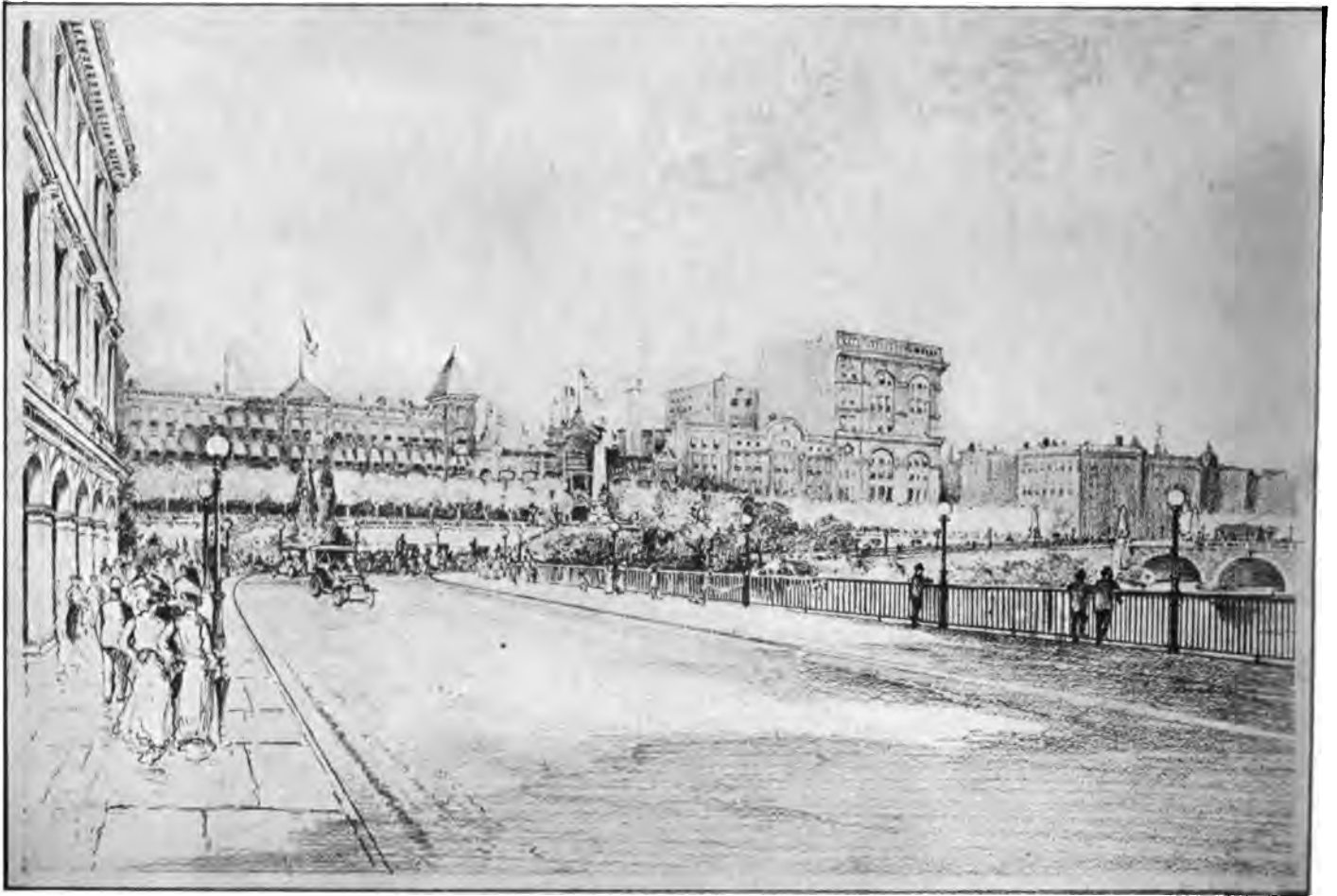
Esthetically, this loss of the river is most unfortunate.

Practically, as a channel of retail trade, Main Street is much more convenient than it would be if cut in two by a wide gap of river over which busy shoppers would have to pass from store to store without protection from the winter winds sweeping up or down the stream.

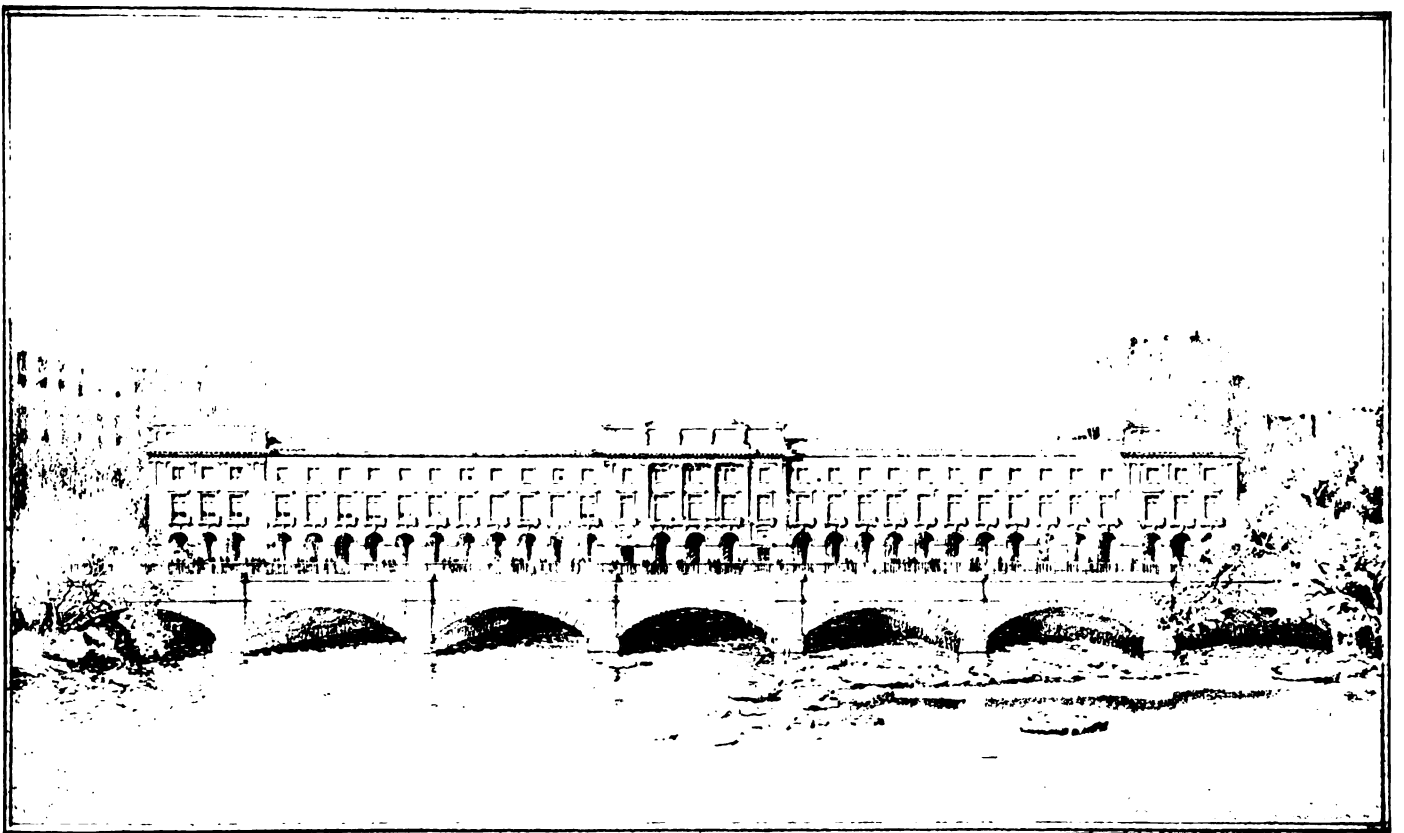
Financially, it would be a serious extrava-

gance to destroy the commercial value which has become attached to these frontages.

Yet it seems very desirable to recognize in some way upon Main Street the presence of the river, and, as the existing structures are not very costly or permanent in character, a plan might well be adopted for their ultimate reconstruction upon a comprehensive scheme which would provide a slight widening of the street over the river, with a space for a monument of some sort in the center, and for the treatment of all the buildings at this point on both sides of the street as parts of one architectural unit. A central archway through the buildings on either side of Main Street might provide glimpses of the river.



SUGGESTION FOR TREATMENT OF OLD CANAL BED. LOOKING EAST ALONG THE AQUEDUCT.



SUGGESTED BUILDING ON OLD CANAL AQUEDUCT TO SCREEN UNSIGHTLY BUILDINGS.



VIEW LOOKING EAST ON OLD CANAL AQUEDUCT, SHOWING PRESENT CONDITION.



VIEW OF AQUEDUCT LOOKING NORTH; SHOWING FACTORIES AND THE REAR OF BUILDINGS ON MAIN STREET.

## The Old Canal Bed

**A** PROBLEM of great importance to Rochester is the determination of the wisest disposition to be made of the Erie Canal bed when that waterway shall be abandoned in favor of the Barge Canal now building. Its location, radiating both northwest and southeast from the proposed Civic Center, and practically paralleling Main Street, only a short block away, through the heart of the city, suggests at once the eminent fitness of utilizing it for thoroughfare purposes.

This canal bed has been suggested as a good location for a subway. As no adequate study has been made of the complicated problems of freight and passenger transportation by rail, it is impossible to offer any conclusion in this report as to the suitability of the old canal site for a subway route. If a subway should be found desirable on or near the route of the canal a certain economy in constructing it in the canal bed is obvious. The fact that a part of the excavation is already done would afford a very slight saving; but the absence of the usual underground constructions, found under a city street, would involve a very real and considerable economy in using the canal bed route rather than tunneling under existing streets.

But whether or not this route is selected for a subway, the surface should unquestionably be utilized for a main thoroughfare for surface cars and general traffic. The present canal

property at many points is not as wide as such a main thoroughfare should be, but there are comparatively few places where the improvements on abutting property are such as to impose a serious obstacle to a slight widening.

The buildings which are at present situated on both sides of the river, between Main Street and the old canal aqueduct, are of great commercial importance, and it would be unwise to propose a scheme to materially alter or disturb them. However, their character and appearance do not lend themselves to any treatment of the river that would be adequate. Accordingly, we suggest that a building of simple but monumental character might be built facing this proposed thoroughfare on the north side of the aqueduct, and constructed on the extended foundations and piers of the present structure. Such a building extending from one river bank to the other would effectively screen the view to the north. It could be used for business purposes, and the arcade on the ground floor would afford desirable space for stores.

East of the river this new thoroughfare would rise (starting far enough west on the aqueduct to secure an easy gradient) to meet the Court Street grade at the end of the bridge; and from here to Mount Hope Avenue it would be combined with South Avenue by widening the latter on the river side. An unsightly row of cheap and ill-kept tenements would thus be abolished,

and in its stead would be a fine, wide street, with a broad tree-shaded promenade overlooking the river and the varied activities of the future Harbor of Rochester. West from the Civic Center this new street would follow the canal bed, filled

to the grades of crossing streets, as far as the Industrial School grounds. Its extensions eastward from the Genesee River, and north and west from the Industrial School grounds, are discussed elsewhere in this report.

## Church Street Extensions

THE new street on the canal bed will undoubtedly prove of value as a relief line for Main Street on the south. But there is far more need at present for a parallel thoroughfare north of Main Street. Such a through street, if properly located, will tend to relieve the congestion of cars and vehicles which is already serious on Main Street, and will furthermore expand the area of high real estate values, such as are now found only on a limited portion of Main Street. In order to serve best its purpose as a relief line for Main Street, it is essential that the new thoroughfare be near Main Street—if possible, not more than a block away.

After a careful study of the situation, bearing in mind not only the first cost of the operation

but the probable value of the result attained, it is recommended that Church Street be widened, and be extended west from Plymouth Avenue to the proposed Civic Center, and east from State to Front Street, thence along Market Street relocated, and across the river on a new bridge connecting with the westerly end of Mortimer Street. The latter should be widened and should be cut through from Clinton Avenue to Franklin Street opposite the end of Ormond. To furnish a good connection with North Street, the corner between Ormond and North Street should be cut back.

This new street will parallel, close at hand, the most congested portion of Main Street, and will connect with the more important northward-bound thoroughfares.

## Street Railway Transportation

NO adequate plan can ever be made for the comprehensive improvement of a city's street system without due consideration at the same time of the problem of street railway transportation. To this end Mr. Bion J. Arnold, of Chicago, has been consulted in regard to the street railway situation and its relation to the street changes herein recommended.

As Mr. Arnold points out, it would be impossible for him to make a plan, showing the exact location of tracks and the operation of cars, without spending much time in Rochester examining the situation and conferring further with representatives both of the railway company and of the City as to the present method of operation and the advisability of changes which might be proposed. He makes the following recommendations, however, in which we

heartily concur: First, that there should be an additional street north of and approximately parallel to Main Street, and through this street some of the cars should be run.\* Second, that there should be a suburban station, for both passengers and express, as close to the central district of the city as practicable; and there should be a supplemental one near the New York Central passenger station; both provided with suitable tracks leading to them. And, third, that the streets at each side of, as well as the street in front, of the New York Central passenger station should be provided with double tracks and with suitable curve connections and switches to enable the cars to be routed in any manner that might later be found desirable.

\*The Church Street extensions recommended above are in direct accord with this suggestion.



TRIANGLE AT THE JUNCTION OF MAIN, FRANKLIN AND NORTH STREETS. ITS PRESENT APPEARANCE.



KARLSPLATZ, MUNICH. SUGGESTION FOR TREATMENT OF STREET JUNCTIONS.

## The Main Street Triangle at Franklin Street

THE proper treatment of that junction of main thoroughfares—the point where Franklin Street, North Street, and East Avenue all join Main Street—is important, and at the same time rather difficult. Without making a detailed plan for this area it is recommended that the small group of cheap buildings

be removed from the triangle between Franklin, North, and Main streets.

The large, open space thus freed from encumbrance would best be treated for the most part as a simple, paved square, with suitably placed islands of safety bearing ornamental lamps and perhaps other unobstructive decorative features.

## The Library

IN determining the most fitting site for a public library two chief considerations have been uppermost: First, it should be reasonably accessible from all parts of the city; and, second, it should if possible be grouped with or located near other institutions of a similar character.

After a careful consideration of many possible sites, bearing the above requirements ever in mind, we have concluded to recommend that the new library be located on the east side of South Union Street, between University Avenue and Main Street, and facing the triangular park between these three streets. It may be urged that this location is somewhat away from the center of the city, and this cannot be denied; but after all it is not far, and it is readily accessible by many different street-car routes

on University Avenue and Main Street. Also it reaps a certain advantage from being outside the pale of exorbitant land values in the business district, for here, without unreasonable cost, sufficient land can be secured not only for present needs, but to provide for an expectable future growth. And again, in a situation like this, facing on a public park, it is a comparatively cheap and simple matter to obtain an adequate and appropriate setting for a dignified public building. Finally, this site, though not lending itself particularly to a grouping of similar public buildings, is close to the University of Rochester, a focal point of great and rapidly increasing educational importance. It seems eminently fitting that these two great institutions be in close relation one to the other.



## Uniting the Railroads

**A**LTHOUGH the general subject of steam railroads has not been studied in detail, certain conditions and opportunities have been noted during the general study which has been made of the city.

The advantages, to the local community and to the traveling public, of combining the passenger stations of different railroads entering a city, are so obvious as to need no comment. Most progressive cities are planning or have already brought about at least some degree of combination; and doubtless, but for the physical difficulties and great cost of such consolidations, there would be much more rapid advance in that direction.

In Rochester there are five separate terminal stations in addition to that of the New York Central, and it appears that the lines entering at least four of these could easily be brought into the New York Central station with a minimum of physical difficulty, and consequently at comparatively little cost. The Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburg tracks, where they enter the city, are already adjacent to the Central tracks, and could be connected therewith without expense. The Pennsylvania tracks, by lowering their

grade a short distance back from the present station, could be carried under West Main Street, thence extended up on a reasonable gradient through the lumber yards, and, curving to the east, join the line and grade of the New York Central not far from Oak Street. The Lehigh Valley and the Erie roads could both cross the river where the Erie crosses now, and from there connect with the Central over the route of the Pennsylvania, extended as above suggested.

The present tracks of the Lehigh Valley and Erie roads, extending down either bank of the river to Court Street, would be retained in whole or in part as freight spurs in connection with the future Barge Canal harbor. Incidentally the opportunity would thus be provided for a direct and economical transshipment of freight between the canal and the more important railroads.

With such a physical union of the railroads the new station of the New York Central (now under construction) would become the great Union Station of Rochester—the one, large, dignified approach by which nearly all people would enter and leave the city.



NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD BRIDGE OVER STATE STREET.



A DIGNIFIED AND INTERESTING RAILROAD BRIDGE IN PARIS.

## Bridges

**N**EXT to its buildings, the bridges of a city are perhaps the most telling elements in its general appearance. Especially is this true of railroad or other bridges over the streets, and of river bridges, like many in Rochester, that may be seen one from the other.

Of this latter type Rochester has several which are distinctly good. For example, the aqueduct which carries the canal across the river is a notably dignified piece of masonry, and the new Central Avenue bridge, of re-enforced concrete, has been designed with the definite purpose of making it at the same time an economical and efficient utilitarian structure and an adornment to the city.

The great gorge, by which the northern part of the city is divided, requires the construction of lofty viaducts, the design of which, in connection with the magnificent scenery of the gorge, presents an extraordinary opportunity. The viaducts thrown across the river in the past give the impression of comparatively frail affairs of light skeleton construction with a correspondingly rapid rate of deterioration. They hardly appeal in any way to the sense of beauty or of grandeur except through bringing people where they can see the depth and the sweep of the gorge itself all unconscious of the un-

lovely streets and the steel spider-webs underneath them. It cannot be long before some of the existing structures must be replaced; additional bridges must also be provided, and Rochester owes it to herself to make these new viaducts adequate, permanent, and with that beauty of well-proportioned, simple form which has placed the world's great viaducts among the most impressive monuments of mankind.

In most cases the railroad bridges over streets in Rochester are, as regards appearance, far from satisfactory. St. Paul Street, Clinton Avenue, North Street, and several other thoroughfares tunnel under the New York Central tracks through low, dark, and very uninviting holes; and even the new bridge over Culver Road, though somewhat more generous in scale, is almost brutal in its engineering simplicity. The railroad bridge over State Street, though of a different type, is another example of the utter disregard of everything but the simple engineering problem. Bridges like these are seen every day by the thousands of people who pass along these streets; and if expense and effort to add to the beauty and agreeableness of a city are ever justified, they should certainly be directed toward making structures of this kind more worthy of the prominent place they occupy.



SKETCH FOR TREATMENT OF RETAINING WALL SHOWING FOUNTAIN ON THE AXIS OF FRONT STREET.

## Other Opportunities for Civic Improvement

**I**N our walks about the city several other opportunities for esthetic improvement have been noted. For example, the northward vista down Front Street is terminated by the high, blank wall supporting the New York Central tracks. This wall is a simple, dignified piece of masonry, and is very far from objectionable as it stands, but a slight embellishment



RAILROAD RETAINING WALL ON CENTRAL AVENUE, DIGNIFIED BUT NOT INTERESTING.

thereof on the axis of the street, as by a simple fountain or the like, would furnish a point of interest that would enliven and improve the vista.

From the Central Avenue bridge the view into the gorge between the piers of the railroad bridge is very interesting, and is seen daily by thousands. But the under side of the railroad bridge is festooned with obstructive wires and other appendages attached in such a manner as to encumber the view, and strung without the slightest regard for appearance.

These are merely examples of the kind of improvement which can be realized in almost any city at very little cost and with striking results in the way of increased civic agreeableness. Generally speaking, it is in this way, by accepting the physical conditions and requirements as they have become established and utilizing every opportunity to enhance without remodelling, that much can be done to improve the appearance of Rochester—to accent and not to sacrifice its individuality.

# PART II

## THE STREET SYSTEM

### General Discussion

**T**HE street system of any city should normally be composed of two distinct types of street—main thoroughfares and local streets. The free and economic circulation of surface traffic requires the provision of a reasonable number of thoroughfare streets connecting the various districts one with the other and connecting all sections with the heart of the city. It may be accepted as a fundamental principle of city planning—or of city replanning—that an adequate system of main thoroughfares should be planned prior to any improvement or extension of the plan of local streets; and that these thoroughfares should be arranged on reasonably direct lines of easy gradient and of ample width to provide comfortably for all expectable future demands for traffic accommodation. Local and individual interests should not be permitted to cramp this ideal, and patiently, gradually, but without compromise, it should be put into effect in order that the general transportation interests of all localities and individuals may be properly provided for. Then, in laying out the secondary or intermediate streets, it will be not only possible without sacrifice of the general interests, but eminently desirable to consult local wishes, individual preferences, and minor economies of land and construction to a marked degree.

Systematic adherence to this principle of distinction between thoroughfares and local streets not only results in a street system that serves the practical requirements of transportation adequately, but it is far more economical of land

and construction because it concentrates the bulk of the traffic on a relatively small number of streets of a width and character of pavement, etc., calculated to handle the business with the least delay and the smallest cost for operation and maintenance. And by leaving the great majority of streets for purely local use, it becomes possible for them to be narrow, inexpensive of construction and maintenance, and varied to suit the needs, the means, and the taste of the neighborhoods they serve. Only by the establishment of an adequate system of special main traffic ways throughout a city can this distinction be realized and a safe way be opened for the economies and advantages that are permissible on strictly local streets. In the absence of such a system none can tell what street or streets may be called upon to carry a heavy burden of through traffic, and all must be made at least half ready for it.

This predetermination of the thoroughfare lines tends also to an increase and to a greater stability of real estate values. The concentration of through travel upon certain streets tends to increase the value of frontage on those streets for stores and other uses which seek the main lines of travel. It is obvious also that this determination of the areas of commercial occupation has in many cases a negative effect of equal value in its practical assurance that the intermediate streets will not be encroached upon for business purposes. Whatever makes for the distinct segregation of different classes of occupancy of conflicting or incongruous character, makes for stability and a higher average



TREATMENT OF AN OPEN SPACE AT THE INTERSECTION OF THOROUGHFARES, MUNICH.



THE THAMES EMBANKMENT IN THE HEART OF LONDON, A FAMOUS RIVERSIDE THOROUGHFARE.

range of real estate values; for the more certain a man can feel that the character of any given street is definitely fixed, the more he is willing to pay for the privilege of having a lot on the kind of street he wants. The sharp differ-

entiation in width and character of treatment between the main thoroughfare and the secondary street is a big step toward this end, as well as a practical economy in dealing with the transportation problem.

## Main Thoroughfares

ON the accompanying map (page 00) the orange color suggests a tentative selection of main thoroughfare routes, some now in use as such, others made up of fragments of less important streets linked together by connections and extensions, others wholly new.

In offering this map we would not claim too much for it. Frankly, it is based upon a superficial study of a desperately complex and important problem. No two men could come to Rochester as we have done, for a few visits, staying only a few days at each visit, and then draw up a complete and perfect plan for a main thoroughfare system. As a basis for discussion, however, it has this value at least: it is the outcome of a wholly unprejudiced examination of the conditions so far as they could be learned through direct personal observation of the city by two strangers having no preconceived ideas, but possessing a considerable acquaintance with the experiences of other communities.

Some notes are given below upon many of the specific suggestions embodied in the map; but the main point we want to emphasize is the

immense importance that, *either upon the lines here suggested or upon other, better lines*, the city should adopt a complete and consistent plan of main thoroughfares, and then see to it that no obstacles are thereafter needlessly permitted to arise which would interfere with the adequate execution of that plan.

Merely having a street where people want to go and calling it a main thoroughfare does not make it fit to serve that purpose. But if the route be well chosen to avoid bad grades, there is only one requirement of a great thoroughfare that cannot economically be supplied from time to time as occasion demands. That one is adequate width. If convenient and economical street transportation is to be provided for, a most imperative need for any growing city is to establish these main channels of circulation of a sufficient width, and to prevent encroachment upon them by new buildings. Without such action the community is bound to suffer serious economic loss; on the one hand through loss of time in transportation due to congestion; on the other hand through the destruction of

useful buildings to make room for widenings. If the matter is to be looked at as affecting the cost to the community as a whole and not merely from the point of view of municipal politics and finance, the destruction of useful buildings is the real item in the damages of widening, the cost of land being in the long run negligible. A little reduction in the available area of building land here and there throughout the city is not in itself a loss to the community. The supply of land on the outskirts is unlimited and the withdrawal of any land from building, other things being equal, simply accelerates the spread of the city and increases the remaining land values. If the withdrawal effects a proportionate improvement in the transportation system, it more than offsets the slight inconvenience of a wider-spreading city.

In other words, any needed street widening would pay for itself if the cost of destroying valuable buildings were not too heavy.

It becomes a serious engineering problem to determine on the width which should be reserved between building lines on thoroughfare streets, and a serious legal and administrative problem how to reserve or secure that width with the minimum cost and interference with business.

So many and complex are the factors involved in a determination of the most economical widths for the main thoroughfares of a city that no exact and indisputable conclusion can be reached; but there are certain facts and principles that ought to remove such decisions from the realm of purely arbitrary whim and custom by which they are now generally settled.

Practically every main thoroughfare, even of the most compact type, must provide for car tracks in the middle. Then, on every busy thoroughfare vehicles must be free to stop for loading and unloading; the space next the curb thus becoming a mere series of stopping places for vehicles doing local business and of sidings into which slow-moving vehicles can turn from time to time in order to clear the main passageway. In addition to this, it is practically essential to provide space for at least one free line of through travel in each direction between the

cars and the slow-moving or standing vehicles next the curb. In addition, it must be remembered that a main thoroughfare is apt in time to become a retail trading street, and wide sidewalk space is therefore important.

The most economical total width for a main thoroughfare should be that which provides enough and not too much space for all these lines of traffic. The exact allowance required cannot easily be determined, for there is much variation in the widths of vehicles, and the necessary clearance between vehicles varies greatly with the skill of the driver and the effectiveness of the police control.

Without here going into details, we may say, what has been frequently shown, that eighty feet is about the least width within which the above requirements can be met, and that ninety feet or, like Main Street in Rochester, 100 feet between building lines is decidedly better. This is on a purely economic basis. If permanent provision is to be made on some of the thoroughfares for street trees and other esthetic features, greater liberality is needed.

The problem of securing adequate width for thoroughfares, old and new, is a very perplexing one. The usual process of immediate entire widening by condemnation, while it may result in a net gain in real estate values along the widened streets and for the city as a whole, requires such a large working capital that a City can seldom undertake more than a very few streets at one time. This fragmentary method of procedure makes it very difficult to adhere to a consistent plan and policy, and often makes it impossible to forestall the erection of obstructive buildings.

Fortunately, except within limited areas, the buildings fronting on most of the Rochester streets are, in general, set back a varying distance from the property line. In other words, the demand for stores and other business structures with frontage directly on the sidewalk, and for apartment houses covering the largest possible proportion of the area of the lot, has not yet become so great as to cause the abandonment of the individual dwelling house, with its front yard or lawn, even on the main lines of travel.



NEW STORE PROJECTING BEYOND LINE OF DWELLINGS. THIS SHOWS THE UNPLEASANT RESULTS OF LACK OF ESTABLISHED BUILDING LINES.

It is possible therefore to provide for the ultimate widening of these streets without the destruction of many valuable buildings, if the preliminary steps are promptly taken.

As the traffic on a street increases the inducement becomes greater and greater for the abutting property owner to build out to the sidewalk line, by moving or extending the old building or by erecting a new structure. It is not in most cases the desire to utilize a greater depth of lot which leads to this change, but simply the desire to get next to the sidewalk and to do away with the front yard which has served its purpose and is not wanted under the new conditions. The very advancement of a few buildings to the sidewalk line is a sure indica-

tion that travel is increasing and that ample width will soon be needed in that thoroughfare. To avoid the cost of destroying these new and often expensive buildings a little later, when the traffic shall have so increased as to demand a wider street, definite action on the part of the authorities should not be delayed after this process of coming forward has begun.

Many places can be found in Rochester where this process is going on, and a very ragged-looking street it makes during its progress. The sensible course appears to be the establishment of building lines far enough apart to leave room for all probable future requirements, but to make no physical widening of the street until the growth of travel or the demands of the abutters call for shifting the sidewalks over to the established building line, and enlarging the roadway to correspond. This is the invariable practice in Washington and in most well-conducted European cities. It is the plan to some extent in New York, where just recently the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue have been moved back against the building line on the space formerly occupied by stoops, areaways, and door-yards. Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixteenth Street, in Washington, are both laid out 160 feet wide from building line to building line, although Pennsylvania Avenue is an important business artery, and Sixteenth Street is a residence street without heavy traffic and with no commercial business. On the former the wide sidewalks are in immediate contact with the fronts of the buildings, as is proper for a business street, and the roadway, with car tracks in the middle, is more than wide enough to carry all the traffic that can ever be concentrated on it. Whereas on Sixteenth Street, the traveled portion of the street, including sidewalks and the space for sidewalk trees, is only 80 feet wide; and the remainder is occupied by front door-yards 40 feet deep, which the householders are at liberty to fence and use almost as freely as if they owned them in fee simple. At the same time all the householders are protected against the premature action of any individual lot owner who might see a possible advantage in being among the first to bid for a commercial business



by building a flat-house, with stores under it, out upon the sidewalk line 40 feet in advance of the other houses. But when a reasonably large proportion of the owners on any street, or any block of a street, are ready for the change, the front yards are abolished and the sidewalk is moved over into contact with the buildings. If a single owner wants to put in a store long before his neighbors are ready to give up their front yards and long before the City is ready to widen the street to increase its traffic capacity, he is, of course, at liberty to do so, but he must not move forward of the general building line. What he usually does is to abolish his own front doorway and substitute an extra wide piece of sidewalk paving in place of it, sometimes using the space for outdoor stands or show cases to attract trade.

If other progressive cities are exercising this mode of control over their traffic arteries, why not Rochester? It would seem eminently wise for Rochester to establish new building lines, at a suitable distance apart, on all of its main thoroughfares where a widening is possible and is likely to be needed.

But to impose building lines that would prevent the encroachment of future buildings upon the space that may be needed for highway uses, even though no present buildings were disturbed

or land withdrawn from other private uses, would involve the offsetting of some individual damage against the general benefit and would require the immediate investment of a large working capital to provide for these damages. Legally the damage accrues as soon as the restriction is established, even though the owner might suffer no inconvenience from it for many years. There appears to be a method for distributing such damages over a long period, a method based upon European practice but modified to meet American constitutional limitations. This method is to make systematic plans for the widenings, but to acquire no rights in the properties until application is made for a building permit on a site that would be obstructive, and at that time to impose and pay for the restriction. Under a slightly simpler legal form, permitted by the courts of Pennsylvania, this practice has been successfully followed in Philadelphia.

But whatever administrative methods be employed, the City ought squarely to face the problem of a real system of main thoroughfares, as distinguished from patching here and patching there. This system should be complete for the whole city, and its extension should be kept well in advance of the subdivision of the suburbs into local streets and lots.

## Local Streets

THE prime function of local streets, best adapted to the needs of the community, is to admit light and air and to afford access for people and commodities to the smallest reasonable subdivisions of private property. The line, the gradient, and the width of the street, the size and shape of the block, the size and shape of the lot, and the percentage of total area to be devoted to streets might reasonably vary far more than is customary under our present methods of street laying-out. The requirements of communities are often very different, and the most profitable arrangement of blocks, lots, and streets will vary accordingly. It may be accepted as a general principle, how-

ever, that, for appearance sake and for economy in construction and maintenance, both roadways and sidewalks should be comparatively narrow. It is obvious that wide pavements will never be needed for the purposes of purely local travel. A reasonable variety in the subdivisions of local streets will add greatly to the attractiveness of the community, and will be a refreshing relief from the all too common monotony of uniformity typical of so many American cities. For residential purposes there is a coziness and quiet attractiveness about a street of moderate width and moderate length—a street through which no heavy traffic is induced to flow; a street which by its short length or varying direction offers





OXFORD STREET, A BEAUTIFUL AND APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT, WORTHY OF DUPLICATION IN THE FLOWER CITY.



SUMNER PARK, AN INTERESTING TYPE OF LOCAL STREET, WHICH MAY WELL BE REPEATED IN OTHER PARTS OF ROCHESTER.

a marked and pleasant contrast with the interminable vistas of the thoroughfare that goes on indefinitely in an unbroken, straight line.

Rochester has much to be proud of already in the way of local street development, and we can hardly do better than call attention to some of the splendid examples she has set herself. No better instance could be cited of the beauty and interest, and even renown, of an exceptional plan of street subdivision and planting than Oxford Street. Of types perhaps less striking but of unusual interest are Upton Park, Rundel

Park, Arnold Park, Sumner Park, Lakeview Park, Lincoln Avenue, and the like. Then there are innumerable instances of residence streets throughout the city where the usual subdivision has been abandoned in favor of narrow roadways, narrow sidewalks, and wide planting spaces. With the definite determination of her main thoroughfares, and the consequent segregation of local and through traffic, there is every reason to believe that Rochester will go much further in developing this admirable individuality in her street system.

## Special Street Improvements

**T**HE following are certain specific street improvements recommended with a view to improving Rochester's system of main thoroughfares:

**Goodman Street** is one of the thoroughfares leading directly through the city from south to north. There is now a break in the street at the New York Central tracks, where traffic is forced to go around by the Main Street bridge. The gap should be filled by a bridge over the tracks.

**North Goodman Street** should be extended north to the proposed southerly extension of Sea Breeze Road.

**University Avenue** is one of the principal thoroughfares leading east from the city, but it comes to a dead end only a block and a half east of Culver Road. It should be extended

to Blossom Road, and possibly, also, along the line of the Rochester, Syracuse and Eastern Railroad to Winton Road.

**Cumberland Street**, leading directly to the New York Central station, just fails to connect with University Avenue at North Street. The corner should be cut to make the connection direct, and Cumberland Street should be widened—say ten feet on either side—to make a more generous approach to the station.

Cumberland Street should further be extended west of the proposed station plaza to Franklin Avenue and St. Paul Street.

**Central Avenue** is the principal street leading west from the station. It is now only 45 feet wide in parts, and should be widened to at least 66 feet (the width of the proposed new bridge), and probably to 80 feet.

From Mill to State Street, Central Avenue should be cut through diagonally to make a direct connection with Allen Street.

**Andrews Street**, connecting the east and west sides of the city and paralleling Main Street, is without doubt destined to become an important line of circulation. At its west end it should be cut through diagonally to the new location of Central Avenue (above), thence connecting directly with Allen Street which becomes a main feeder to the west.

At its eastern end it should be extended straight through from North Street to Main Street, near Scio Street.

**Park Avenue** should be an important feeder to the east, but unfortunately it reaches no further in town than Alexander Street. The most practicable plan of improvement is to extend it directly from here to the intersection of William, James, and Court Streets, and to widen James Street and continue it west of Chestnut Street to meet an extension of the north and south portion of Elm Street. The Park Avenue line will then extend, with reasonable directness, to the very heart of the city. Park Avenue is in especial need of widening from Goodman Street to Alexander Street, this portion being only 50 feet in width.

**Harvard Street** should not dead-end at Meigs Street; it should be extended to the intersection of Alexander Street and Monroe Avenue.

At its east end, Harvard Street should be continued to Colby Street.

**Averill Avenue** is a pretty good piece of a crosstown street, but it ends in a pocket north of Monroe Avenue. It should be cut through to Sibley Place which connects, via Prince Street, more or less directly with Main Street.

**Edinburgh Street**, on the west side of the river, should be connected with Alexander Street, on the east, by a new bridge. The two streets would then form a good crosstown thoroughfare.

An improved connection between Edinburgh Street and Bronson Avenue, and the extension of the latter west to Chili Avenue, would add much to the value and importance of this route.

**Clarissa Street** bridge should connect more directly with Gregory Street. A small circle or triangle at the southeast end of the bridge would provide such a connection.

**South Clinton** and **Highland Avenues** should be extended southeast by a new diag-

onal street meeting the Westfall Road just west of Winton Road, and extending from there toward Edgewood Avenue.

**Plymouth Avenue** is an important distributing thoroughfare south, but north of Main Street it practically stops at Commercial Street. The east corner of Commercial Street and Plymouth Avenue should be rounded back to ease the connection between Plymouth Avenue and Frank Street. The latter thus becomes an important feeder, paralleling State Street and Lake Avenue.

**Court Street**, paralleling Main Street on the south, should certainly not dead-end at Exchange Street. Two diagonal extensions should be cut through, one to the corner of Plymouth Avenue and Troup Street, the other to the junction of Fitzhugh and Spring Streets.

**Spring Street** should be extended from Caledonia Avenue to Prospect Street to connect with Clifton Street. It will then make a good line, paralleling Main Street on the south.

**Seward Street** should be extended north from Bronson Avenue to Troup Street, meeting the latter just where the Spring Street extension crosses it.

**Arnett Street** should be widened from Genesee Street to Snyder and there connected directly with Bartlett Street by a short diagonal or an open square.

**Sawyer Street** should be extended east from Elgin Street to the junction of Jefferson and Plymouth Avenues to give a direct outlet west, especially for the latter. It should also be extended southwest from Thurston Road to the corner of Brooks and Buell Avenues.

**Exchange Street**, at Magnolia, should be brought into better relation with Elba Street by means of a small circle or triangle. Elba Street should be widened on the southeast to Cottage Street, and from there a diagonal connection should be cut through to Plymouth Avenue at the end of Barton Street.

**Wellington Avenue** should be a through street from Chili Avenue to the junction of Genesee Street and Elmwood Avenue, or the entrance to Genesee Valley Park. This can be accomplished by cutting through from Sawyer to Ellicot Street, following Kron Street (widened) to Brooks Avenue, and thence cutting a new street to Elmwood Avenue.

**Buell Street**, running south from Brooks Avenue, should be extended to the Scottsville state road.

**Child Street** should be connected with Genesee Street by a diagonal, starting at or near Wright Street and joining West Avenue opposite Genesee Street.

Then, to complete the crosstown line, Child Street should be extended north from Lyell Avenue to Otis Street, thence connecting with Dewey Avenue and the proposed canal boulevard.

**Tonawanda Street** should be widened to make a good connection between Allen Street, leading in town, and Maple Street, a radial feeding line to the west. The corner of Wilder and Brown Streets should be cut back to ease the connection to Tonawanda Street.

**Tacoma Street** should be extended from Driving Park Avenue to Lakeview Park to connect with Raines Park.

**Bloss Street** should be extended west along the side of the Industrial School grounds (when the Industrial School is removed) to the proposed thoroughfare on the present canal bed. The extension of Felix Street east would then connect Bloss with Otis and Child Streets.

**Broezel Street** should be relocated diagonally between Driving Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue in order to connect Dewey Avenue directly with Maryland Street.

**Maryland Street** should then be extended south from Ravine Avenue to Emerson Street, and thence across the Industrial School grounds to Bloss Street and the proposed canal boulevard. The Dewey Avenue thoroughfare is thus brought directly to the new Civic Center.

**Park View Street**, from Lake Avenue to Maplewood Park, should be widened to provide ample connection from Big Ridge Road and Little Ridge Road to a new bridge over the Genesee River.

This new bridge should reach from Park View Street extended to a point about opposite the end of the Ridge Road on the east side of the river. In this location it would link important highways east and west of the river, and in addition would serve as a river crossing for a parkway proposed elsewhere in the report.

**Clifford Street** should be extended straight to St. Paul Street at Huntington Park. From here a new bridge should be built across the

river gorge to Emerson Street, thus making a through east and west crosstown line between the Smith Street and Driving Park Avenue bridges.

**Emerson Street** should be extended, from its present westerly end, a little north of west, to meet the Big Ridge Road.

**Little Ridge Road** should be connected with the future thoroughfare along the canal bed by a new street running southeast to the sharp bend in the canal just west of the Western Wide Waters.

**Avenue E** should be extended diagonally from Conney Avenue to the corner of Avenue D and Hollenbeck Street.

**Avenue D** should then be cut through from North Street east to Lux Street, and Lux Street should be extended to North Goodman Street. A crosstown line is thus secured from the Western Wide Waters to Waring Road.

**Scio Street** should be extended from Central Park to the end of Miller Street.

**Miller Street** should be extended north to Jennings Street, and thence to Portland Avenue.

**Rohr Street** should be extended to Clifford and Ulrich Streets; and Ulrich Street should be extended from Jennings Street to the junction of Portland Avenue and Randolph Street.

**Joseph Street** should be extended from Ridge Road north to the junction of East Side Boulevard and Titus Avenue.

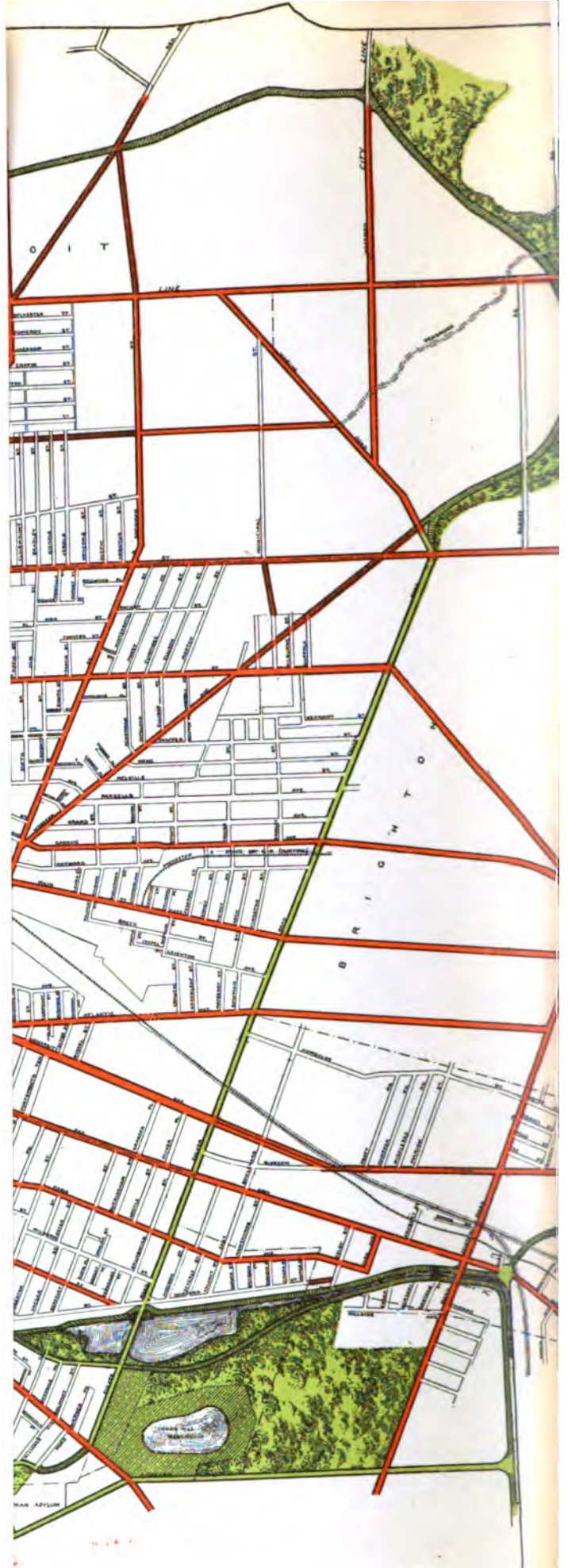
**North Street**, and probably Carter Street, should be extended north to Ridge Road, and eventually beyond.

**Portland Avenue** should be connected more directly with Sea Breeze Road, thus making a better line to Sea Breeze and the mouth of Irondequoit Bay. To do this, a diagonal street should be cut through northeast from Portland Avenue at the corner of Norton Street.

**Webster Avenue** should be extended directly from Bay Street to Clifford Street, and thence to Waring Road and the proposed parkway extension of Culver Road.

**Municipal Street** should be extended south from Clifford Street to connect with the extension of Webster Avenue.





# MAP OF ROCHESTER

SHOWING PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

PREPARED FOR THE  
ROCHESTER CIVIC IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE  
W. W. BRUNNER  
ARCHITECT

FREDERICK L. OLMSTED  
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SCALE 1" = 100'

# PART III

## THE PARK SYSTEM

**T**HE areas in a city which are designed and set apart for purposes of public recreation, may be conveniently considered as belonging to three distinct groups—local or neighborhood parks; rural parks and outlying reservations; and parkways.

### Neighborhood Parks

**T**HE full-fledged local recreation center might ideally be expected to provide the following: (1) Sheltered lawns and sand heaps where small children can romp safe from the dirt and danger of the street; (2) sufficient areas properly designed for the outdoor games and gymnastics of boys and girls and young men and women, accompanied by ample opportunity for indoor and outdoor bathing; (3) shaded walks and comfortable seats where mothers may sit and watch their children play, and where, on evenings or holidays, the people of the neighborhood at large may listen to a band concert, or merely rest or stroll amidst refreshing and spacious surroundings of green foliage and lawns; and (4) a central building or group of buildings, with indoor gymnasiums, baths, model sanitary arrangements, a branch of the public library, and sufficient rooms for concerts, lectures, club meetings, and similar social gatherings. To provide for so many and such varied uses all in the same park would obviously require a considerable area. But the advantages of grouping similar activities of this sort are so pronounced that, within reasonable limits, it is wiser to secure a smaller number of fair-sized parks than the same total area made up of a large number of very small parks and squares. The experience of the South Park Commission of Chicago suggests that, other

things being equal, about twenty acres is the most efficient local park unit.

But of far greater importance than the size of the individual park is the distribution of these parks about the city. Probably the most fundamental consideration in planning to supply the local recreation needs of a city is that every family to be served must be within easy walking distance of the park which is to supply its needs. And by easy walking distance is meant a distance so insignificant that it will not deter the little child, or the tired mother with a baby, from going to the park for half an hour's recreation when the chance comes. It is doubtful if these people can be expected to walk more than a quarter of a mile, and of course they can seldom afford to ride.

If twenty acres of park land, either in one neighborhood park or divided into several specialized units, were to be brought within easy walking distance of every home in the city, it would involve setting apart between five and ten per cent of the total city area for such purposes. From twenty-five to forty or fifty per cent is set apart for streets without hesitation.

It should be noted that existing natural features or conditions of special interest, such as the Genesee River, the shores of Lake Ontario, or Cobb's Hill, can play but a very small part in the selection of lands for local parks. An equi-



table distribution and a sufficient number of square feet are the prime considerations; and to plan such a system must require a very thorough study of the local conditions, including not only the values of land and improvements, but the character and needs of the people. No adequate attempt could therefore be made in this report to lay out a system of local parks. We do urge, however, that the subject be pursued as systematically and made as much a matter of course as the opening of streets. Action in the older parts of the city must, we suppose, be slow; but in the outskirts no new subdivision ought to be opened up without provision for the local park needs of the people who are to occupy the tract.

About the best method of procedure in securing local parks is as follows: First, get the cash in hand; second, decide upon the general locality within which the park is needed and the functions which it is to serve; third, make a general examination of the values of property within the locality, consider roughly the cost of developing different pieces of land into the sort of park required, and select, tentatively, one or more sites which seem promising; fourth, obtain options on such of the land within the limits of the tentative site or sites as can be put under favorable option; then, fifth, ask pub-

licly for the tender of any lands in the locality for parks, and hold public hearings thereon; finally, in the light of the information thus secured, select definitely the site and boundaries of the park, and take it by condemnation proceedings. It is far better to proceed in this way than to begin by buying or accepting certain pieces of land, no matter how favorable the terms may be, and subsequently acquiring adjacent pieces to rectify the boundaries or complete the requisite area. The very establishment of a park renders the adjacent land more valuable at once, and therefore, if the City buys park land piecemeal, it has to pay in the later purchases an increased price due solely to its having previously started to establish a park in the neighborhood. The condemnation process, preceded by obtaining options where possible, takes all the land at one and the same instant, and the cost is that of land in a parkless district.

Delay is apt to add but little to the cost of acquiring parks in built-up regions where land and building values are reasonably stable, whereas it adds enormously to the cost in regions at the growing margin of the city. Here, the greater city of the future is being made, and here if anywhere must be the greatest opportunity for municipal foresight and economy.

## Rural Parks and Reservations

THE large rural park or reservation, like Genesee Valley Park, Seneca Park, Durand-Eastman Park, and Highland Park, should provide something quite different from the small recreation ground for strictly local use. Since only a small fraction of those who use it come from the immediate vicinity, it can be visited only occasionally and with some effort. Its main justification, therefore, is to afford something which the small local parks are unable to give. To afford the maximum of pleasant contrast with ordinary urban conditions is its fundamental purpose, and if it fail in this there is reasonable doubt if its return in public usefulness is

worth its cost to the community. A considerable degree of seclusion from adjacent land with its city developments is practically essential, and the more complete the barrier, both as to sight and sound, the more perfectly will the park fulfill its purpose. A sense of spaciousness is very important, the expansive opposite of cramping city streets and walls. For this is needed the concentration of a large area in a single park. But of greater importance than mere size is the topographical situation and natural qualities of the landscape. Hilltop lands are not in the least secluded, but they frequently offer vantage points from which to look upon vast stretches of landscape, thus giving the



GAS TANKS IN THE RIVER GORGE AT ROCHESTER; HOPELESSLY UGLY, AND DISCOURAGING TO DEVELOPMENT OF NEIGHBORING PROPERTY.



GAS TANKS IN DRESDEN, WHICH SHOW THAT BUILDINGS FOR THIS PURPOSE NEED NOT BE UGLY.

greatest possible sense of spaciousness and lack of confinement. On the other hand, valleys and low-lying lands, especially when enclosed by wooded slopes, are unrivalled in the natural opportunities they afford for almost complete seclusion from urban surroundings. Rochester is very fortunate in its four large parks at present, one exhibiting the broad, quiet scenery of the meadows, one the extraordinary picturesqueness of the Gorge, one the sweeping views from a wooded hill, and one the beauty and seclusion of intricate valleys, wooded ridges, and a bit of lake shore. But, apart from questions of extending the public control of the

Gorge, there will be need, as the city grows, for other large public reservations, a need which is not yet pressing, but which cannot be ignored in planning for the future.

There are in various parts of any city lands having peculiar advantages of topography especially adapted to certain park purposes, such as certain water fronts, commanding hills, places interesting for geological or botanical reasons, and also places having peculiar sentimental or historical associations. When the amount of such lands is limited in extent, or is likely to lose its park value if commercially developed, it should be early reserved by the City.

## Parkways

**B**ECAUSE of the fact that large parks and rural reservations must be limited in number and must be comparatively remote from the major part of the city area, and because they can usually be most economically situated in localities that are not traversed by important thoroughfares, it is found that their usefulness may generally be much enhanced by narrow, extending arms reaching out into the surrounding territory and forming park-like approaches to them. Thus, in effect, they are brought near to a much larger body of citizens

without seriously encroaching upon the area of building land.

Such parkways, moreover, when they connect two or more large parks, multiply in effect the extent of park area conveniently available to the community. When wisely planned and managed, parkways, like the large parks, may generally be made to serve several of the purposes of local parks for the adjacent territory without interfering at all with the primary purpose for which they are intended; they may thus have a double value.





GLIMPSE OF THE OLD CANAL AT ROCHESTER.



CANAL AT THE HAGUE: A POSSIBLE SUGGESTION FOR ROCHESTER.

## A System of Outlying Parks and Parkways for Rochester

**R**OCHESTER'S present park equipment, except for the general lack of local recreation grounds and extended parkways, is a remarkably admirable one.

Highland Park is well known not only for its commanding situation, but for its interesting, beautiful, and unusual display of flowers, trees, and shrubs. The Cobb's Hill Reservoir grounds, though raw and unfinished as yet, are well on their way toward becoming a park which will furnish the finest opportunity in the vicinity of Rochester for a broad and impressive outlook over the surrounding country. Durand-Eastman Park is another recent acquisition little known as yet to the people of Rochester; but it has great potential value as a public pleasure ground, for it comprises a most interesting and beautiful variety of irregular valleys and ridges, and, above all, preserves for the people the free enjoyment of a considerable stretch of the shore of Lake Ontario. Genesee Valley Park and Seneca Park, with which may be grouped Maplewood Park, have already been referred to.

With such a foundation to start upon it requires little more than a few extensions, additions, and connections to complete a park system of which the future Rochester will have every reason to be proud. The following rec-

ommendations are made with this ideal in view, and with the further purpose of saving for Rochester certain landscape units and features of very unusual local interest and value. The areas which are here recommended for taking are approximately shown in green cross-hatching on the small map of the city and surroundings at the end of this report.

The line of hills between Highland Park and Winton Road, of which Pinnacle Hill and Cobb's Hill are the highest knobs, should be controlled by the City and utilized for park purposes. Nowhere in the near vicinity of the city are there any heights from which so extended and impressive an outlook can be had. The orphan asylum near Monroe Avenue would of course remain, except that a right of way should be obtained for a curving extension of Culver Road west to Pinnacle Road; and a small built-up section west of Winton Road and immediately south of the canal need not be taken. But St. Patrick's Cemetery, near Clinton Avenue, now abandoned and uncared for, occupies one of the finest portions of the ridge, and every effort should be made to secure this land, or at least to make some arrangement whereby walks, and possibly roads, could be run through it.

Another most striking and unusual opportu-

nity is that offered by Irondequoit Bay. This splendid sheet of water, with its beautiful and irregular banks, now almost precipitous, now gently sloping, generally wooded, and, on the west, broken by numerous charming and secluded little valleys reaching out like arms to the plateau land above—what more perfect opportunity could be asked for holiday enjoyment and complete freedom from the daily surroundings of the city! We do not recommend an attempt to secure the entire bay, with all its shores and many little ravines, as a public reservation excluding all private occupancy; but, on the other hand, to leave the exploitation of this great natural pleasure ground entirely in private hands would in the end result in excluding from it many of those who need it most, and also in sacrificing much of its natural beauty in the effort to get quick returns. Some sort of public control of the most important and most easily damaged features of the landscape should be arranged for in the near future.

The experience of Boston with two popular waterside resorts is very interesting in this connection. One at Revere Beach on the ocean, the other at Riverside on the Charles River. The former had in 1892 run the course of many a free-and-easy popular resort and fallen into a condition of shabby disrepute which kept the great decent majority from going there any more. But since the Metropolitan Park Commission took hold of it, cleaned it up, provided first-class bathing arrangements and proper policing, the popularity of the place has enormously increased, and both the private amusement enterprises and the adjacent dwellings are more numerous and more prosperous than ever. At Riverside, too, there has been an enormous development of boating since the advent of the Commission; partly because of the few non-commercial facilities which it has provided, partly because of the protection of the scenery and the opening up of many public landing places and picnic spots, and partly because of a watchful and intelligent policing which has put a check upon the occasional instances of loose conduct apt to develop at any such place, and certain, if not controlled, to give rise to a reputation

that destroys the value of the place to the great majority of those who need it most.

Another natural feature of striking beauty and great interest is the Genesee River Gorge, extending from the upper falls, almost at the center of the city, nearly to Charlotte. This river gorge, in which are the three great natural falls of the Genesee, has played a telling part in the growth and history of Rochester, and for this reason, if for none other, it should be saved and treasured as a civic memorial. But if it had no such historic interest, it still remains a very striking and beautiful piece of landscape, part and parcel of the individuality of Rochester; and for the sake of civic pride and distinction, as well as for the popular enjoyment of the scenery, it should certainly be brought under public control as far as possible. It is recommended, therefore, that the City acquire the entire Gorge from the top of one bank to the top of the other (except where the value of private developments makes it out of the question) from the southerly end of its present holdings to the upper falls. Sometimes the banks are mere precipices, and these should be saved from defacement; sometimes there are considerable areas of low-lying flats along the river, and these could be filled or diked and made into beautiful and useful park meadows. It is further urged that public control of the river banks be extended down the river about to Ferry Road, and that Seneca Park be extended north to include the bowl-shaped area of bottom land about a mile and a half from the mouth of the river.

A control of the river banks above Genesee Valley Park is also recommended, in order to preserve the value of this stream for canoeing and other water sports, to as large an extent as possible. It would further be a distinct improvement to get the property between Genesee Street and the Pennsylvania Railroad from Elmwood Avenue to Brooks Street as an extension to Genesee Valley Park. The railroad could then be moved to a new location close to Genesee Street, thus leaving the park property in one unit—a much more efficient arrangement. It is understood that this improvement is already being planned.

With the abandonment of the Erie Canal as a commercial waterway, it seems highly appropriate to preserve certain portions of it for pleasure boating and for general park purposes. To this end it is recommended that both the Eastern and the Western Wide Waters be maintained. In the former case enough space should be controlled along the northern bank for a broad promenade lined, perhaps, with Lombardy poplars; and the holdings on the southern shores should extend to the present and proposed park land at Cobb's Hill. The Western Wide Waters should also be surrounded by park land which would extend, say, from Eddy Road to the railroad tracks and from Lexington Avenue approximately to the line of Seneca Parkway.

It is understood that the Industrial School property is likely to be used for an exposition ground. If this is done, or if it should be used merely as a park, it is suggested that the canal be maintained from the Western Wide Waters, at least as far as this property. A formal basin or other dignified water treatment, properly related to the design of the future exposition ground, would be an element of considerable interest and beauty.

In addition to the several parks which go to make up an outlying park system, it is necessary to provide adequate extensions and connections, such as boulevards and parkways. To this end the following recommendations are made:

Considering first the parkway extensions, it is urged that the thoroughfare to be constructed upon the old canal bed be treated as a parkway. That is, from the Civic Center northwest to the Wide Waters and beyond, and from Court Street southeast to the other Wide Waters and beyond, additional area should be secured, over and above that absolutely required for traffic, to be utilized solely for planting, promenades, and other so-called recreative features. Such widenings would vary greatly in amount, depending almost wholly upon the ease or difficulty of securing the land; but this variety in the width, and consequently in the treatment of the parkway, would rather add to its interest. West of the Industrial School grounds and east of the

Eastern Wide Waters the canal itself should probably be maintained, and parkway drives and promenades could follow the banks of the waterway. This canal, like the river, is closely associated with the growth and prosperity of Rochester, and parts of it at least should be preserved, even if it were only as a civic monument. But fortunately these strips of water have also a very real pleasure-giving value.

It is suggested that a branch be run from this canal parkway to connect with the Dugway Road, and thus into the Irondequoit Valley. This drive would leave the south bank of the canal at the bend just east of Winton Road, meet East Avenue at a grade high enough to go over the Auburn Branch tracks, continue over the Rochester, Syracuse and Eastern and the main tracks of the New York Central, thence descend to the eastward, and extend in a curving line and with varying width to the Dugway Road.

From the southern end of Genesee Valley Park a new parkway should be laid out to the southern end of Highland Park, substantially as shown on the general map. Elmwood Avenue, treated as a boulevard, should furnish an inner connection between these two parks. From Highland Park to the canal, Highland Avenue may reasonably be the main pleasure drive. Another drive, however, should follow the north boundary of the proposed park as far as Culver Road; at the south side of the Eastern Wide Waters it would connect with the canal parkway leading in town, and would then extend along the south shore of the Wide Waters to Winton Road and the above-mentioned extension to the Dugway Road. From Cobb's Hill north, Culver Road offers the best location for a parkway; it will be an important line, and additional width could wisely be secured both for the traffic roadway and for planting. From Clifford Avenue the parkway should be extended northeastward, bending around the nose of the hill and back to Woodman Road. Branch connections might extend down the several ravines to Irondequoit Bay. From Woodman Road one route would follow north a short distance along the existing road, and thence down one of the

many ravines leading to Durand-Eastman Park. From this park a connection should be provided following up one of the little valleys westward, and joining the northerly end of Seneca Park through the proposed addition. The other route from Woodman Road would extend west, along the low land just south of the Ridge Road, to Seneca Park nearly opposite the end of the proposed new bridge across the river. Seneca Parkway would be the route from Maplewood Park to the Western Wide Waters, and from here southward Field Street should be widened and improved as a parkway. This street should be carried over the New York Central tracks to West Avenue, and a direct connection could thence be secured with Lincoln Avenue by holding West Avenue up over the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburg tracks and raising the end of Lincoln Avenue to meet it. The parkway would then follow Lincoln Avenue for some distance, finally bending to the east to meet Genesee Park

Boulevard, following which it would reach Genesee Valley Park at Elmwood Avenue.

The above recommendations must be regarded merely as preliminary and suggestive—something in the nature of an outline for an outer park system. Our attempt has been to point out the general principles which should be the basis for solving the problems of parks and parkways rather than to present detailed and specific plans for park improvement. With these principles in mind we have made the general recommendations and suggestions here submitted, attempting thereby to lay out the skeleton of a park system which would secure for Rochester the maximum recreative value for the amount invested.

Respectfully submitted,

ARNOLD W. BRUNNER,  
FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED,

February 10, 1911.



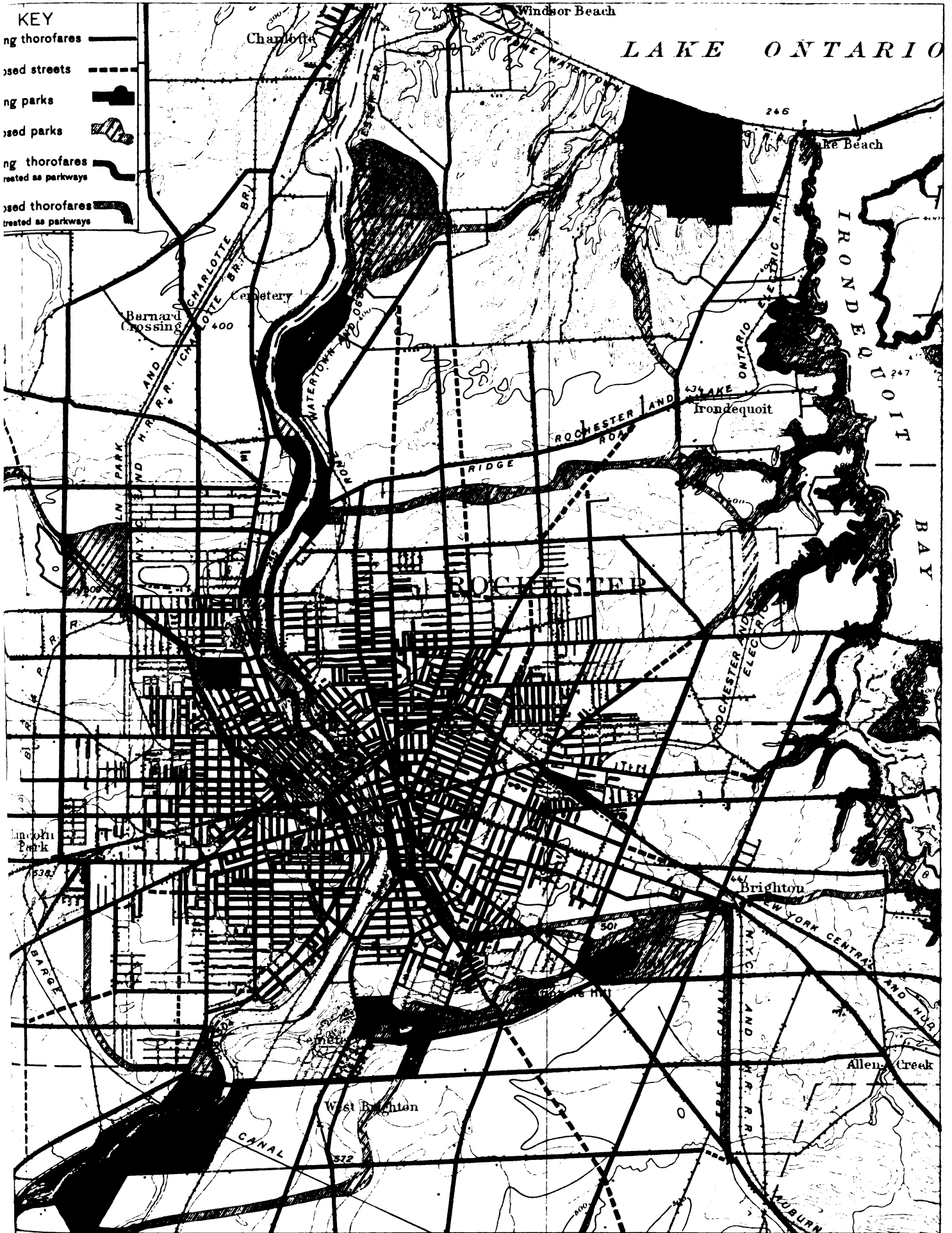
IRONDEQUOIT CREEK, AT THE HEAD OF THE BAY.



COMMERCIAL WATER FRONT AT ANTWERP.



# MAP OF ROCHESTER SHOWING THOROFARES, PARKS, AND PARKWAYS



Map of U. S. Geological Survey

Scale 1:25000

Miles







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NAC 6827 Roch 1911  
A city plan for Rochester; a report  
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